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SUBJECT: BRAZIL LACKS STRATEGY IN HONDURAS

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Classified By: Political Counselor Steve Liston, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)
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¶1. (C) Summary: Brazil, which had pinned much of its hope for a quick resolution of the Honduras crisis on the success of an OAS or Costa Rica President Arias, mission to Tegucigalpa, now seems at a loss of how to protect its Embassy in Tegucigalpa and negotiate itself out of the standstill in Honduras, domestic crisis. Brazil has vowed to ignore Micheletti's ten-day ultimatum for the release of Zelaya, yet fears the repercussions its embassy will face, and is looking to the UN Security Council for help. End summary.

BRAZIL SITTING ON ITS HANDS AND WAITING

¶2. (C) Brazil's Ministry of External Relations (MRE) Head of Mexico and Central America Division First Secretary Renato de Avila Viana in September 28 and 30 meetings said that Brazil was ignoring the ten-day ultimatum the Micheletti government gave the Brazilians for turning over Zelaya, however, greatly fears the repercussions its Embassy in Tegucigalpa will face once the ten days have passed. Viana thinks that the Micheletti government is looking to buy as much time as possible, which is why they barred the OAS delegation from entering the country, but time is what Brazil does not have in this situation while its Embassy houses Zelaya and is under constant threat by the Honduran security forces. According to Viana, the Brazilian Embassy in Washington received a bomb threat via telephone call against the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa; Viana said the United States Secret Service is working with the Brazilian Embassy in Washington to trace the call.

¶3. (C) Viana said he was no longer confident that the OAS will be able to enter Honduras and begin a negotiation between the Micheletti and Zelaya factions in the near future, and it is evident that President Arias is trying to untangle himself from the Honduran situation as well. According to Viana, Brazil does not yet have a new strategy to deal with the Honduran crisis taking place in their embassy and is now looking to the Security Council to take a strong stance on the situation to lead to greater international assistance. Viana said that the MRE is only focused on engaging the USG and Spanish government on the issue of Honduras. His office at the MRE has been turned into the Honduras situation room, running from nine in the morning until eleven at night, every day, but they were only processing information on the situation and not planning for the resolution of the crisis.

14. (C) Brazilian Senators Eduardo Azeredo (PMDB-Minas Gerais) and Heraclito Fortes (DEM-Piaui), chairman and member of the Senate External Relations and National Defense Committee respectively, told PolOffs on September 30 that Brazil is not able to deal with the situation in Honduras and needs USG assistance. Fortes said "We are not ready for this. Not in Honduras. We don,t even have an Ambassador. It is just one officer and his driver." Azeredo stressed that the United States "should not separate itself" from its recent tradition of taking a strong role in promoting democracy in the region. He believes that the USG is trying to take a more non-interventionist role, but said that this is not the time to stay on the sidelines.

COSTA RICA SHYING AWAY FROM INVOLVEMENT IN HONDURAS

15. (C) In a September 28 meeting with Poloffs, Costa Rica Ambassador to Brazil Jorge Alfredo Robles Arias said that, while Costa Rican President Arias has the will to help mediate the situation, he will not make any effort to that end until he sees both the Micheletti and Zelaya camps willing to come to the negotiating table. Robles explained that Arias will not risk his international prestige unless both sides are willing to move forward. Robles said that the Brazilian government had yet to contact his embassy for information on Arias, potential role in the crisis and that Costa Rica had no contact with the Micheletti government.

16. (C) Robles emphasized that Zelaya,s return to power was an unconditional demand made by Costa Rica and the rest of the region. Robles explained that it was after Secretary Clinton suggested that Arias become involved in the

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resolution of the crisis in Honduras that he offered up the San Jose accord. According to Robles, all items in the accord are ultimately negotiable, with the exception of Zelaya,s return to the presidency. Robles repeatedly pressed for the U.S. position on Zelaya,s return to power, questioning if the U.S. Congress, lack of support for Zelaya could lead to decreased pressure from the United States on Honduras and the international community to act. PolCouns told Robles that the United States had not changed our position with regard to the need for a peaceful resolution under the frameworks already laid out.

POORLY PLANNED OAS MISSION DERAILED

17. (C) Robles and Viana both confirmed that four out of the five OAS representatives sent to Honduras were barred from entering the country on September 27. Robles claimed this was because of a lack of strategy by the OAS, which sent a small group of representative who lacked status and diplomatic credentials without giving Honduras previous warning of their arrival. Only the Chilean representative of the five sent was allowed to enter Honduras, most likely because of his experience in the region, according to Robles. Viana said that there are actually two OAS representative in Honduras right now, the Chilean and the second highest ranking Brazilian representative to the OAS. The Brazilian representative, Viana explained, was going as part of the derailed mission but flew into Tegucigalpa before the five other members of the OAS delegation who encountered problems. Viana also noted that the Brazilian,s entry into Tegucigalpa was aided by the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa.

18. (C) Viana claimed that the Spanish government was also struggling to reestablish their presence in Honduras. The Spanish Ambassador and two other diplomats have been barred from entering the country until Spain recognizes the Micheletti government, a situation Viana said the Spanish are

very troubled by. According to Viana, the Carter Center, Friends of Democratic Charter are also planning to send a delegation to Honduras next week, however, he believes they will also struggle to enter the country.

19. (C) Comment: It is notable that Viana, Robles, and Azeredo all expressed concern that the United States might waiver in its current stance, and that the OAS and regional mediators alone cannot make inroads with the Micheletti and Zelaya factions. Having been vocal in its support for Zelaya, return and dragged--almost certainly without advance warning--into an unaccustomed place at the center of the crisis, Brazil appears to be at a loss as to what to do next.

It is remarkable that the GOB has apparently made no effort to reach out within the region or taken a more assertive role in seeking a resolution. Instead, planted firmly in the back seat, it appears Brazil is looking to the United States, the OAS, and the United Nations to safeguard its interests and, it hopes, navigate toward a long-term solution.

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